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Social and human rights questions: social development

Statement submitted by the Inter-Parliamentary Union, a non-governmental organization in general consultative status with the Economic and Social Council

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 30 and 31 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31 of 26 July 1996.

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Economic and Social Council
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SOCIAL AND HUMAN RIGHTS QUESTIONS
(b) Social development

Written statement presented by the Inter-Parliamentary Union

Parliamentary contribution to the assessment of progress on social development issues since the World Summit for Social Development (WSSD)

The Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) believes that, whereas economic policy and the issues of globalisation and trade liberalisation are high on the agenda of governments, social development receives much less attention. This led the Inter-Parliamentary Council* to adopt at its 162nd session (Windhoek, Namibia, 6 April 1998) a political declaration on the need to give substance to the social development commitments undertaken at the Copenhagen Summit (see text in the Annex).

In addition to adopting a political declaration, the Inter-Parliamentary Council thought it necessary for the IPU to contribute to efforts of evaluating the progress made with regard to social development since the Copenhagen Summit. The Council decided that the best way of associating parliaments with this global review would be to address a questionnaire to all IPU member parliaments on parliamentary action since 1995 to give practical effect to the recommendations of the Summit. The replies to such a questionnaire and their analysis would provide the Union's input for the work of the UN Commission on Social Development at its 1999 session.

Furthermore, the Council launched a proposal that a new tripartite meeting of parliamentarians, representatives of governments and representatives of intergovernmental organisations be held in 1999 with focus on the implementation of the results of the WSSD (the first such meeting was held at the UN Headquarters in New York in September 1996). This issue would also be the subject for debate at one of the Union's statutory meetings in 1999. The Inter-Parliamentary Union intends to be present at the various preparatory

* The Inter-Parliamentary Council is the plenary policy-making body of the IPU, comprising representatives of the Union's 137 member parliaments.

meetings for the Special session of the UN General Assembly on the implementation of the outcome of the World Summit for Social Development.

Finally, the Council was of the view that it could greatly benefit from the results of « social audits » of a representative selection of countries which would indicate the level of implementation of the results of the Copenhagen Summit. To this end, the Council instructed the Union's Secretariat to explore the possibility of obtaining such audits from competent international organisations, such as the World Bank.

ANNEX

DECLARATION ON THE FOLLOW-UP OF THE WORLD SUMMIT FOR SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

Adopted by the Inter-Parliamentary Council at its 162nd session
(Windhoek, Namibia, 6 April 1998)

While the economic agenda of governments is proceeding at a fast pace,

While globalisation, investment rules, corporate profits and subsidies, formation of trade blocs, efficiency goals, etc., are given high priority and enjoy unprecedented attention and consideration,

The world's social agenda is lagging behind because of lack of political will and the misplaced belief that economic progress can be disconnected from social progress.

At the World Summit for Social Development (WSSD), commitments were made by governments on behalf of each State. Therefore, the fulfilment of these commitments calls for the involvement of all the branches of the State, including Parliament whose fundamental role is to represent and express the will of the people.

Three years have passed since the World Summit. The time has now come for governments to implement their commitments and to give an account to the people for any failure to do so.

The IPU urges governments which participated in the WSSD in Copenhagen to give proof of their political will, confirm progress and implement the recommendations awaiting action, as contained in the 1995 report of the World Summit for Social Development.